

# New outlaws brace for onslaught aimed at fringe of society

**Duncan Campbell examines the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, while Vivek Chaudhary looks at some of the activities that the bill aims to ban**

"**P**EOPLE are having a hideous time in some areas," said Lady Olga Maitland, Conservative MP for Sutton and Cheam. As she expressed her anger over the delay in the passage of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill this summer: "The public has a right to expect proper action to be taken now."

Action, whether the public deems it proper or not, is due to be taken when the bill reappears in the Commons in October — after the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, confirmed in July that it would be delayed to allow a series of defences in the law to be reversed.

People who live on what are seen as the edges of society believe that once the bill becomes law they will indeed be in a "hideous time".

Certain clauses are aimed at people — squatters, ravers, new-age travellers, hunt saboteurs and demonstrators — whose very mention at a Tory party conference can raise a "no-hiss" response to a noise level that would, under the bill, constitute a new offence.

Effectively, the key clauses aimed at those groups are:

Gathering: Clauses 65, 66: Empower local councils, an application by the chief constable of more than 20 people on a

request to leave can be made by a local authority even if vehicles have the landowner's permission to stay. "Damage" to property can include urinating.

A local authority's duty to provide sites for a limited number of travellers is abolished.

Hunt saboteur: Clause 63: makes it an offence for a trespasser on a highway — provided it is not a surfaced road — to attempt to disrupt or obstruct an activity taking place in the open air.

Squatters: Clauses 67, 68 and 69: give additional power for anyone authorised by a property's owner to make forced entry. A squatter refusing to leave immediately could face a prison sentence.

Stop and search: Clause 55: enables a police officer of inspecting rank or above who believes that "incidents of serious violence may take place in any locality" to authorise stop-and-searches of pedestrians and vehicles.

Resistance to the above clauses was slow to develop.

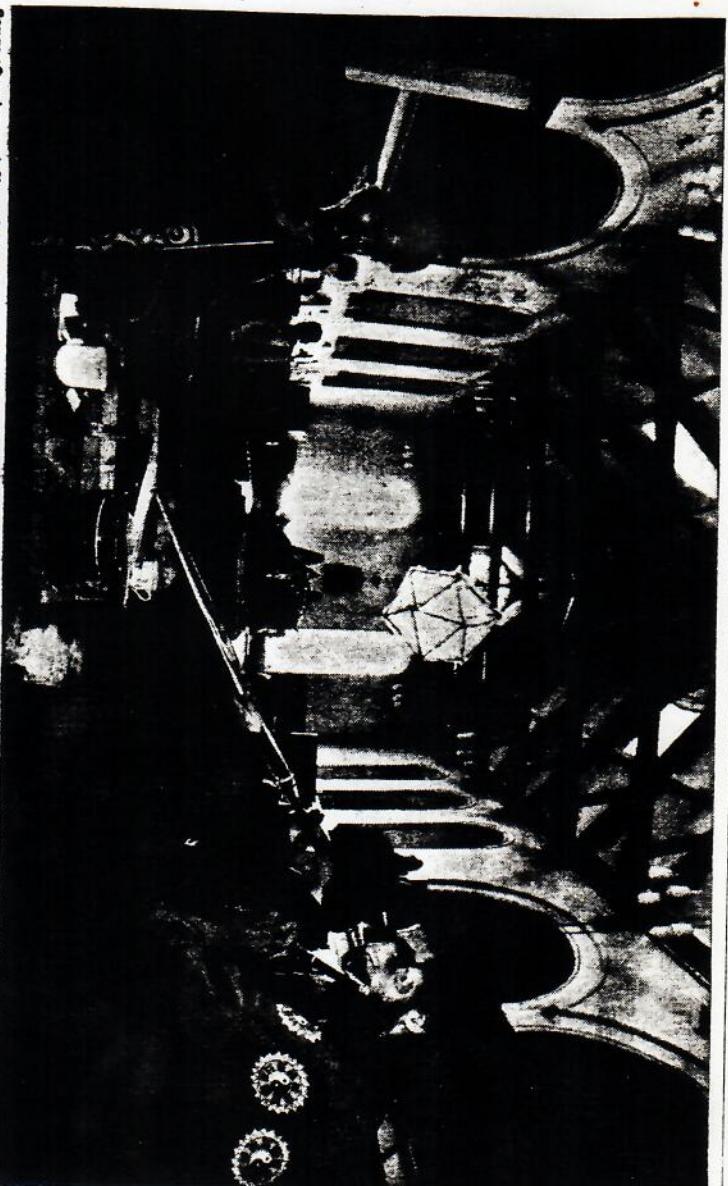
Neither the main opposition parties nor the trade unions

opposed the bill, and the Conservative

Opposition has since come

Bangs of praise ... A disused church squat in north London offers an advice centre and 24-hour cafe

PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER



## The DIY culture stands united on home front

### The squatters

**L**ESS THAN two months ago it was just another inner-city London. Today, it is home to an eclectic collection of drifters, students, musicians, and eco-activists.

The squat was "busted" open (squatters' terminology) on

littering a building three weeks ago. Within hours, a legal notice on the front door warned the authorities that they need a court order for eviction.

Under the criminal justice bill, the notice will be about as useful as the other sign on the front of the building in Kentish Town, north London, giving the opening times of the former Department of Health and Social Security office.

Once the bill becomes law, squatters will be evicted within 24 hours, and most of the 25 resi-

"I'm good with my hands and have got tools. I've been doing as much work as I can," says Christine Slattery, aged 27, a former journalist, one of 100 people trying to get legal authority funding for the squat. The eventual aim is to try to set up Christian studios, creche facilities, and permanent accommodation for homeless people.

With a blanket wrapped around her to keep warm, she sleeps by a computer in her mostly-kits room, writing letters to the London borough of Camden outlining their plans. They have been told that the borough intends to evict them, but remain optimistic.

"We hope to carry on, but I despair when I think about the criminal justice bill," she said. "Where would all these people have gone if the bill had been in effect?"

"There is not enough accommo-

dation as it is. The bill is just going to push people on to the streets."

**'We hope to carry on, but I despair when I think about the criminal justice bill. Where would all the people have gone if it had been in effect? There are not enough homes as it is. The bill is just going to push people on to the streets'**



